

Labor Age

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Active Workers Conference

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"Paterson Can Feed Her Own"

BELLIGERENTLY announcing to all that "Paterson can feed her own," the rulers and owners of this New Jersey melting pot of numerous races and nationalities, a typical industrial city in the East, are making hopelessly inadequate efforts to relieve the ravages of unemployment, which is involving, according to official figures, almost 40,000 of its 138,513 residents.

Registration of the unemployed in the "silk city" is growing at the rate of 250 a week. By March 25, Good Friday, 11,914 persons, representing 38,147 individuals, some shamefacedly and all helplessly, had brought themselves to the municipal relief headquarters in the old public school building on Fair Street. There they were made to wait in line and publicly announce that they must have the necessities of life provided for them.

In October, 1931, the New Jersey legislature enacted emergency relief legislation. Two years after the depression was under way, the news reached the vigilant authorities of the Garden State that unemployment and its attendant miseries were rampant.

The state aid which these solons provided calls for the creation of an emergency relief administration with control over aid funds, and for an appropriation of approximately \$9,000,000 in separate funds to be used by the municipalities and counties from October 13, 1931 to June 1, 1932—municipalities to receive from the state one-half of their expenditures for employment relief (direct work) and 40 percent of their expenditures for dependency relief (straight charity).

The Counties Are Helpless

Passaic county was to spend \$240,000 (the state to give half) for work relief. Paterson, the largest city in the county, to date has done nothing. That this helplessness is not a phenomenon indigenous to Passaic county alone, but is the rule throughout the state, is evidenced by the announcement of State Director Chester L. Barnard of the New Jersey Bell Telephone Company, that the various counties are now permitted to receive the state's half of the proposed expenditures without matching dollar for dollar. However, Passaic county's board of freeholders hopefully issues bi-weekly statements to the effect that relief possibilities are not yet dead.

But even if the \$120,000 offered by

by A Paterson Worker

the state were accepted and the program undertaken it would mean employment for only 400 Republicans for twenty weeks at \$15 weekly, aiding about 1,600 persons.

In Paterson the Board of Finance has discovered that it cannot appro-

The Paterson silk workers' branch of the C.P.L.A. has been the chief alert force in that community, driving ahead in a prepared campaign for jobless relief and in attacks upon the vile shop conditions.

Details of the picketing of the State Legislature at Trenton on this score, of the investigation ordered by Senate President A. Crozer Reeves and of what followed that probe will be given in a story in the next issue.

The unemployment relief campaign of the C.P.L.A. in Paterson and New Jersey is just beginning, and more important steps than those mentioned will be taken during the coming month.

appropriate any more money for relief and a \$250,000 "voluntary" contribution campaign is under way. There is much questioning now as to what the director of this campaign receives for his work. Is it a "substantial percentage" or a straight sum, such as \$6,500, is the question heard.

A study of the contributors to the drive reveals that workers, lucky to have a job and make their \$20, more or less, a week, are being shaken down for two percent of their weekly earnings for sixteen weeks. Girls working in the "five-and-ten" with their grand wages of \$8 or so a week are asked to contribute for persons to receive from \$1 to \$7 weekly.

Nearly \$200,000, thus far, has been realized by bleeding the workers in order that the "honor roll" card may be given employers to place in their windows and have their names (free ads) in the newspapers daily. Ask a worker whether he thinks he is being coerced into giving his money for "sweet charity" in order that the 100 percent from his firm may be attained!

The helpfulness of this board of finance can be gauged by the fact that it spent about as much as the amount to be raised for an old Y.M.C.A. building which is still empty and useless.

Number of Unemployed

In attempting to estimate the number of unemployed it is important to bear in mind that a large number who are in need have for various reasons not registered for relief. This number it is of course impossible to estimate accurately.

No occupational analysis has yet been made and is not expected to be made for several years. But a cursory survey indicates that of the nearly 12,000 individuals who have registered asking relief about 80 percent are industrial workers.

According to the census of 1930 there are 62,860 persons gainfully employed in Paterson of which 10.7 percent are under 20 years of age. Of these 62,860 persons 35,382 non-industrial workers, leaving 27,382 non-industrial or white collar workers. Thus on a proportionate basis there are probably 5,000 white collar workers in the same situation as the industrial workers. A large number of these white collar workers to whom poverty is a new sensation find it repugnant to admit need for public charity and as a result become burdens upon relatives and friends.

Relief administrators do not know and are actually in fear of knowing the correct number of needy men, women and children, for they are aware that the facilities and resources of the city and state are in no way competent to meet the actual situation.

But a conservative estimate of the unemployed in Paterson would place the number at nearly 20,000. And this number does not include part time workers nor workers, of which there is a large number, who are barely able to eke out a living with full time work.

Feeding Her Own

Leaving the great numbers of unemployed and unregistered to hope for an early summer let us now consider the relief administration in the city. Of the 12,000 registered, 532 have received employment in private firms. How many of this number are still working is not known. Work on public parks has meant wages for 429 more at the rate of \$20 weekly every other week.

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Edison Deal with Union Officials Exposed

LABOR AGE herewith brings to light the startling agreement made between Arthur Williams, General Commercial Manager of the Edison Company and Richard O'Hara, President of Local 3 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, in 1924. This agreement, which assures the Edison Company against any effort on the part of the union to organize the employees of the Edison Company, has received the endorsement of the Building Trades Council of New York City, Long Island, and vicinity. The terms of this shameful pact are still in force and govern the relations between the Edison Company and Electrical Workers Union No. 3. The salient points of Mr. Williams' letter of January 29, 1924, follow:

"The Electrical Workers have desired to extend the informal agreement heretofore unexpressed in writing which has been in existence during the past 15 or 20 years, and through which there has been a very favorable degree of mutual understanding and gratifying progress in the electrification of the city.

"The present unwritten understanding or so-called gentlemen's agreement, resulted from a strike amongst the Electrical Workers of the city some 15 or 20 years ago. The principle was established that there are certain features of New York's electrical service which should be conducted through the agencies of organized labor and other features relating to a continuous and satisfactory supply of electric current at all times which in the interest of organized labor as well in the general public interest, should remain outside of the field of organization so fully occupied by the Brotherhood.

"This understanding was established through a series of conferences in which finally the minds of the Electrical Workers, as expressed by their representatives, and of the company met and concluded in this gentlemen's agreement to which we have referred. It shall be recorded to the credit of organized labor as well as, we think, to the credit of the company, that throughout the interesting period of many years, though questions have arisen from time to time there has been no charge on either side of a breach of faith, either in the spirit or the letter

of the agreement. It is seldom that one will find after many years an agreement of such an informal and so unusual a nature so scrupulously observed by both of the assenting parties.

Agrees Not to Interfere With Hiring and Firing

"Were the company to enter into agreement to limit employment in its operating or other activities to any given organization, it would by that act deprive all other owners of their interest in this great property right (the franchise)—which in the judgment of the Company should have no moral or other justification. This is but another of the conditions which have led the Company to consider that in all operating matters under its franchise, it should possess inherently and at all times, a choice of method and personnel determined only by questions of economy, efficiency and service, impartially and universally rendered to all alike. Most happily for all concerned it would seem the representatives of No. 3 have upon reflection accepted this view with practically little exception throughout the many years.

"Having these considerations before it, the Company is prepared to enter upon an informal understanding that all of its construction work not directly relating to the equipment used exclusively in its operation for the public service shall be done directly or indirectly by the representatives of Electrical Workers No. 3.

"Thus we feel, and your organization has agreed in the past, that the installation of all meters as generally termed, and all other measuring instruments necessary to insure accuracy in our records in our customer relations, and all transformers and converters' service and other controlling switches, devices and apparatus also directly necessary for the proper operation of the general system and appliances and apparatus also directly related to this operation and franchise obligation shall be performed by our own organization."

The foregoing terms, as laid down by Mr. Arthur Williams of the Edison Company, were "acted upon and endorsed" by the regular meeting of Local 3 on Thursday evening, April 17,

1924, and transmitted in a letter signed by John Goodbody, Recording Secretary, and Richard O'Hara, President.

At a meeting of the Building Trades Council held on April 1, 1924, "it was voted unanimously that the understanding or memorandum agreed upon between the Committee representing the New York Edison Company, the Electrical Workers Local No. 3 and the Committee of the Executive Commission of this Council: Be approved and same ordered made a matter of record of the Building Trades Council of New York City, Long Island and vicinity." This information is contained in a letter dated April 20, 1924, signed by Roswell D. Tompkins, Secretary, and John Halkett, Council President.

The 33,000 workers of the Edison Company and affiliated companies are thus left to the tender mercies of the Edison Company to be worked at wages under the union scale, to be laid off at the will of the company, and to be abused in countless ways, while the union in the industry, under its present leadership, places the seal of approval upon these actions.

Paterson's Hungry

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The remainder of those registered is thrown into the hands of the dependency relief administration which is in the hands of a political appointee, the superintendent of outdoor relief, known to others as the overseer of the poor.

Conceding the possibility that there has been no favoritism, no leakage due to political expediences and incidental corruption, in fact assuming that everything is running smoothly in the best of all administrations, there still remain, after subtracting 1,000 getting work relief, 11,000 registrants or about 35,000 persons.

In addition to the 1,000 registrants getting work relief there are 2,591 families or 10,048 persons who are receiving charity from the overseer of the poor. That leaves 8,500 of those who have registered without relief of any kind.

To Get Relief . . .

Now let us see what it requires to get relief. The applicants must register,

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